

An Obligatory Starship Genius Epilogue Story

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An Obligatory Starship Genius Epilogue Story

by [ItsaMePatches](#)

Summary

After the events of "Starship Genius" and "Little King John: The Flood".

It would've been nice to have met him at a more relaxed, less-life-threatening environment, but the Final Charge was to happen soon, and the yellow fella known as Ratboy Genius was aware he could only give the king enough time to recover from his sudden appearance from his world.

The last time Ratboy Genius saw the odd king, he was safely being carried off in a transparent bubble.

During the whole kerfuffle, Ratboy Genius' mind must have played a trick or two on him – which wasn't very nice, to be honest – because Ratboy could've sworn he saw Little King John steal a quick glance over his shoulder to see where he was.

Was...was Little King John worried about him?

He must've been imagining things, Ratboy was certain.

Notes

Wow, it's been a little over 5 years since my last Ratboy Genius fic, huh? Let's fix that!

(No worries, the Galactic Heroes are alright because I said so)

It would've been nice to have met him at a more relaxed, less-life-threatening environment, but the Final Charge was to happen soon, and the yellow fella known as Ratboy Genius was aware he could only give the king enough time to recover from his sudden appearance from his world.

Perhaps there was a jolt when the other rat, the one known as Little King John, landed to his feet and readjusted his vision, for once he noticed Ratboy, his eyes became noticeably wide before he took a shaky step towards him. Ratboy felt a nagging thought at the back of his head that he would not be surprised that Little King John wanted to slug him for flooding his world in the first place – suppose it was reasonable.

Again, now wasn't the time to slug or be slugged.

Seeing John finally looking out the glass walls of the starship to witness first-hand what was going on with wild bewilderment written all over his face was interesting, to say the least, and because he was in such a sudden state, Ratboy was able to tug him away by his wrist and inform John what he needed to do in order for the final steps of the Charge to be a great success. Although still taken aback by everything, Little King John obliged.

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He must've been imagining things, Ratboy was certain.

#

It was a beautiful day in Ratboy's Kingdom, and on this day in particular, Ratboy Genius had been awake since the break of dawn – for what reason was to be anybody's guess who saw him driving around in his red buggy with a concentrated look on his face.

Things had been hectic the past few months – though it felt like five or even six years, to be honest – but had all finally come to a halt. No life-threatening events, no more talks consisting of astonishingly far-out science fantasy (which absolutely numbed the dumb brain of the writer typing this tale), no fish (well, none in the 'killer fish' sense) – just a slice of

regular life in the kingdom; however, as the days past into weeks since the epic battle with the Big Fish Boss, Ratboy Genius had a pestering thought at the back of his head again.

He believed he gave Little King John enough time to himself since then and that, well...maybe it was time to meet up with him - to thank him for what he did; after all, Little King John had come quite a while away from the first impression he left on Ratboy.

His little red buggy stopped to the side of the dirt road, just a couple of feet away from the shimmery river. Ratboy Genius, with a quiet hum of thought, cupped his chin. The other rat must have softened over time, sure, but he couldn't expect a *massive* difference in his mood towards *him*, so Ratboy knew he would have to be a little more restraint with his naturally friendly demeanor until Little King John was open about his own feelings. He didn't want to make him uncomfortable...

Ratboy Genius nodded to himself upon reaching the conclusion.

A prairie dog suddenly darted by, closer to the water, with two others, calling out as it went by the buggy, "Hello, Ratboy Genius!"

The rat in question perked up in his seat and gave a quick wave. "Hello, prairie dog friends!"

Once they were out of sight, doing whatever it was which prairie dogs did, Ratboy placed his hands back to the steering wheel and exhaled through his nose.

Well, it was time to get ready, he supposed.

#

It stood out like a sore thumb with its blocky, pixel-like appearance amongst the cedar trees of his castle's backyard, but the portal was happily welcomed to be a part of the yard anyway. Remembering the coordinates for the other rat's home took him a few times, but on that day, Ratboy found his fingers extending up, down, left, and right as he pressed the glowing buttons while Summer Solstice Baby watched him from behind.

"Are you sure you're gonna be okay by yourself, Ratboy Genius?" She cocked her head to one side.

He looked over his shoulder and gave her a tiny smile, replying in all honesty, "I think I will be, Summer Solstice Baby. I trust Little King John won't do any harm."

Maybe.

Summer Solstice then lifted her chin into the air with a skeptical hum as she crossed her arms. "I dunno...he's not as self-centered by what you've told me, but just be careful because of how he used to be, promise?"

“Of course! I promise I will.”

“Good!”

Ratboy Genius finally turned his whole form around to face the human girl, smiling a little wider. “Well, I’d better go now.” On cue, the portal lit up behind Ratboy with a colorful semi-transparent void which contained a mixture of purple and blue. “I’ll tell Sneezy that you said ‘hi’. Bye!”

Summer Solstice gave a tiny wave and beamed back at the cute rat. “Bye, Ratboy Genius! Don’t forget what I said!”

Taking a few steps back, he nodded in reply before he felt the oddly tingling, cool sensation of backing into the portal; eventually, it was less of him backing up and more of the portal’s light gravitational pull luring him into its embrace, to teleport him into a whole new blockish world.

Fwip!

#

How many times had he been through a portal? Well, three or four, if he had to guess, but still, it was an experience full of awe to Ratboy Genius, no matter how many times. The colorful flashes of light surrounding him and the “tube” of the portal which would twist and turn every so often to guide the lad to where he requested to be with gentle care, not sharp turns, or abrupt stops like he had braced for the first time he rode through a portal.

In fact, Ratboy Genius loved how many twists he was going through and couldn’t help but let out a happy sound with a flap of his hands and ears, “*WheEEee!* This is fun!”

Up, down, left, and right he went, and – at last – he could see a bright light coming ahead, that light soon turned into the faint sight of scenery growing detailed by the second. Ratboy prepared himself for re-entry with a smile remaining on his furry face.

As he felt his feet touch some ground, he had to shut his eyes momentarily because of the sudden change of light. “Oof,” he mumbled above a whisper. He had to admit that bright lights could bother his head on occasion and had to take medication if it was too bad, but thankfully luck was on his side, for the minor pain faded upon hearing the familiar “*pap pap*” of feet coming his way.

The walking stopped.

Ratboy could sense the-one-to-greet-him’s tail was wagging behind him as he chimed, “Here now, we have a visitor – and it’s a face I happen to know quite well!”

He grinned and, at last, opened his eyes. There was Buck “Sneezy” Dodger staring up at him in the middle of a field full of wildflowers, wagging his tail happily. “Sneezy—”

Ratboy paused in the midst of his excitement and then corrected himself, “Buck Dodger! I am so happy to see you again after all this time!”

As soon as Ratboy knelt on one knee, Sneezy stood on his hindlegs and rested his front paws atop the bent knee. “I’ve missed you, Ratboy Genius. And to what you said prior, I do indeed go by ‘Sneezy’, even with the mission having come to its rousing conclusion not long ago,” the creature replied.

Ratboy blinked. “You have...?”

Sneezy cocked his head at him. “Is there a problem?”

He shook his head. “No, I am just surprised. I didn’t think you would want to associate with that name afterwards, that’s all.”

Sneezy gave a hum, understanding. “That makes sense, and for a while, I believed I would go back to ‘Buck’ or even ‘Dodger’, but I feel as though a part of me doesn’t want to let go of ‘Sneezy’ after everything we went through. Call it...*sentimental*, I suppose.” His tail gave a faster wag. “Maybe I just like it – who knows!”

Ratboy nodded. “If that’s what you want to be called, then I will call you by that name, Sneezy.”

“Thank you.”

“No problem.”

Sneezy returned his front paws to the grass with the set making a small “*pap*” as he did so. “Come along, I know you’re curious about this world...and a certain ruler *of* it.”

Once again, Ratboy nodded before he rose straight whilst his ears wiggled naturally out of anticipation. “Okay! Would you like to show me around on the way?”

“Of course, I’d be delighted to! Follow me.”

With a jerk of his head, Sneezy gestured him to follow, and of course Ratboy Genius did as he was asked. As the rat had noticed earlier, the teleporter he came through sat amidst a field a while away from any residential structures. Why not anywhere closer to Little King John’s castle was uncertain.

Ratboy Genius was glancing every which way in silence as his feet continued walking beside Sneezy now.

At the first handful of steps, he only saw scattered, developing trees with the faint hints of green buds lingering amongst the flower field, but as they walked further ahead, Ratboy began to notice more land, a building here and there, a lone tower, some still developing sites, and huge, blooming trees which gave off these lovely soft pink petals. They could have been cherry blossoms, but—

“These cherry blossoms are rather lovely, aren’t they?” Sneezy looked over at his friend.

Oh, guess they were.

Ratboy Genius nodded, folding his arms behind his back. “Yes, they are! Coming here and seeing what has happened with this slab of land is interesting, knowing who was behind most of this scenery around us.”

Sneezy nodded. “Perhaps hanging out here would be ideal once the two of you get your greetings out of the way.”

The timing of noticing the endless outstretch of this world’s ocean grabbed the attention of the corner of Ratboy Genius’ right eye. A little frown formed, remembering the fact that all of that ocean must have been so much more than that prior to “The Great Deluge”. Although he apologized in his own way during their first conversation, Ratboy still felt the need to do it in a calmer setting.

The sudden sound of his feet walking across cobble instead of grass yanked his attention away from the faint sight of the ocean. He looked down momentarily to see that he and Sneezy were crossing an arched cobble bridge which connected to another part of the land and over the little man-made stream.

“We’re getting closer to the castle,” Sneezy told him. “He’s probably holing up in his room until he knows we’re there.”

“I hardly know a whole lot about him,” Ratboy responded, “but I have a feeling that I shouldn’t be surprised that he would be doing that.”

“I can see why you’d think that way, you were able to get that impression during the times you *did* interact with him.”

A few of the cherry blossom petals fluttered between the duo and, curiously, Ratboy Genius reached out a hand and was able to catch two or three of the pink petals in a closed fist. He pulled the closed hand to himself and opened it.

As he and Sneezy went down a brief flight of stairs, Ratboy Genius couldn’t resist info dumping a little bit, saying, “In parts of the world in general, there are usually special parties held for the blooming of cherry blossoms to celebrate the arrival of spring and to enjoy the trees at full bloom. I think it is called ‘*hanami*’. Does Little King John do that for his trees?”

“Not that I am aware,” Sneezy responded with a shake of his head without slowing down his walking speed, “though that sounds interesting. As a suggestion from me, you could bring that up with him later.”

A shadow soon loomed over the two, and Ratboy looked up to see a “castle” which appeared to stretch into the heavens (so to say, anyway) now coming into view. Despite it being somewhat warped by aging, the various parts hammered, strapped, or whatever else that was used on or around it, and the vines and flowers even blooming from the fantastical shape of the building, Ratboy Genius recognized it as the dear starship he and his friends rode long, long ago (well, it was “long, long ago” in this world Little King John resided in).

A tiny smile crossed Ratboy Genius' face as they, at last, approached the entrance. "It has aged well, the starship."

Sneezy nodded while his odd tail wagged casually. "You should see the inside. Come now, I'll open the door."

#

The faint sound of water rushing lingered in Ratboy Genius' ears as he followed Sneezy around some more, this time, inside the vessel which was once a great space craft. Despite being indoors, he still could feel the fresh air lightly brushing against his fur but from above, that was when he – out of curiosity – looked up and saw that the roof of the former ship was open, now serving as a sunroof for the castle.

Whenever a place full of life is left abandoned for an extended period of time, time itself consumes it until the place eventually becomes a vine, dust-covered relic of its former self. Had it seemed that way when Little King John and Sneeze found it? If so, Ratboy Genius couldn't imagine how it could've looked.

It wasn't beautiful like the places he had been to in the past, no, but the different texture of the grass, the ground, the walls surrounding them were something he had never seen before. This place was more like something out of...well, Minecraft.

"Sneezy," Ratboy Genius spoke up, asking, "where is Little King John? We've been wandering around now for a few minutes."

Sneezy turned his head to look at his rat friend, about to reply, but waited when he felt himself perking up due to a faint sound snatching his attention away. True, there were several faint noises going off at different directions caused by various things, but this one in particular was unique – it was an organ playing a rather somber tone, and Sneezy knew which direction it was coming from.

"Speak of the devil," the Galactic Hero said out loud, "he's at it again instead of staying in his room. You hear it, don't you?"

Ratboy Genius hummed quietly and struggled to listen for any specific sounds that Sneezy could be talking about. Water, the wind, and-- "I hear it now. It's hard to make out, but I can hear bits and pieces of an organ playing '*What Power Art Thou?*', also known as '*The Cold Song*'."

"Oh, so that's what it's called? He has been practicing that song all this week, but I can't seem to remember if he told me the name of it. Let's go meet him."

As expected because of the presence of tracks around the castle, a minecart was summoned to come and pick up the two. Sneezy set course to where the other rat of the hour

was playing an aria.

So much for him being holed up in his room like first thought.

#

Ratboy counted the passing of three minutes for him and Sneezy to finally arrive to a closed room, sealed by massive double doors where that somber tone continued playing, much louder though somewhat muffled by said doors.

“Impressive,” Ratboy Genius mused as he hopped out of the cart, “he’s playing the vocalization on the organ as well.”

Sneezy nodded, joining him. “The vocalization portion was what he had been focusing on this week. He’s improved.”

His large ears twitched as a method to tune into the music while pondering to himself, “I wonder if we should wait for him to finish.”

“I wouldn’t recommend it. Last time I tried to do that, I stood out here for an hour.”

“Hm...”

That was when Ratboy Genius spotted the right door was creaked a smidge, a bit enough for the light from the room to seep through. Well, knocking on the door could prove fruitless if the music was loud, so he chose to do the next best thing with Sneezy in tow. Gently, he placed a hand on the door, and then he pushed it by a few inches, enough for the two to enter the study.

The study – that’s definitely what this room was. Books upon books layered on two towering shelves: one on the right, one on the left. The wooden floor was graced with a massive rug which laid in the center and stretched further ahead to the enormous window which had a perfect view of a cherry blossom tree to the right. Closer to the left of the window was a large organ that was being occupied for the moment by Little King John himself.

Ratboy Genius blinked and then glanced over to Sneezy who joined his side. Sneezy glanced ahead momentarily and then returned the stare, jerking his head towards the rat royal. It was apparent that, maybe, he was almost done playing another round of the song, so that would’ve been the best time to announce his arrival.

Ah, there they were, the final lines.

Let me, let me

Freeze again...

Let me, let me

Freeze again to death!

A few more notes played, and then it faded, allowing for the current player at the organ to rest his flexible fingers on the keys.

An oldie, but a goldie, and Ratboy Genius felt happy that he heard that aria played rather dramatic in nature (well, a bit more than it did in the beginning), but he shook his head and quietly cleared his throat.

“Knock knock, Little King John. That was a wonderful piece you played.”

Those flexible fingers were resting much harder on those keys all of a sudden, so much harder that the organ let out a yelp of various notes; however, the organ was relieved of the impulsive soon enough as Little King John shot from his seat and spun around with a surprised look plastered upon his face.

And there he was, Ratboy Genius, giving him a wave with a smile as Sneezy watched the two with a wagging tail.

The little king’s mouth was half-way agape because, maybe, he couldn’t sum up anything to say right away to someone he might or might not have been concerned about not too long ago – another possibility could have been due to, well, someone else apparently being in the room while he was practicing an aria. Whatever the case might have been, Little King John found his voice.

“...Ratboy Genius?”

“Yes, it’s me. It is good to see you again! Have you been doing okay?”

“...” Little King John was quiet, but then he nodded in reply. *“Overall. It’s taking me some time to wrap my mind around everything, but it has gotten better.”* He didn’t think he had much else to say at the moment, but when he noticed Sneezy jerking his head at Ratboy Genius, he mentally rolled his eyes and knew that standing so far apart from the other rat wouldn’t suffice for anybody. So, with an awkward shift, he slowly treaded over to the two, folding his arms behind his back. *“Good to see you in one piece, I guess.”*

Sneezy gave him a look. *“‘I guess’?”*

The king, in response, gave him a look back which read, ‘I was talking to the yellow fool, not *you*.’

Not paying much attention to Sneezy’s question repeat of what Little King John had said, Ratboy Genius held out a hand to the other rat without that smile of his faltering. “I wanted to drop by, say ‘thank you’, and maybe spend some time with you and Sneezy,” he said in all honesty, “if that’s alright with you, Little King John.”

Little King John blinked. Oh, he wanted a handshake, huh? From behind his back, he could feel his right hand twitch at the thought, but he forced himself to ignore whatever could’ve made it do that in the first place and retrieved his hand and took hold of Ratboy Genius’, loosely at first. “I don’t see why not.”

Sneezy quirked a brow at Little King John. What was with the hesitated state John was in?

“But *I* get to lead where we go,” the royal rat added before Ratboy Genius could say anything, “you’re in *my* kingdom, after all.”

Ratboy Genius agreed with a nod. “Of course. Would you like to lead the way now?”

Staying quiet for just a moment, he withdrew his hand out of Ratboy Genius’ and returned it behind himself. Little King John turned his head to clear his throat and continued to ignore the questioning stare of Sneezy, and then he returned his attention to the other rat. “It would make sense, considering where you are and who *owns* it.”

Even though his response was – expectedly – stuffy, that smile on Ratboy Genius’ face refused to falter.

#

Sneezy and...that *other fellow* were waiting outside the castle for him – he shouldn’t keep them waiting, perhaps; however, if they knew better, they would know to *have some patience for the* Little King John.

The royal rat huffed quietly at that assurance as he fiddled with his cape in front of the body-length mirror. He had to look presentable, especially in front of *him*.

“ ... ”

His eyes went from his fingers which positioned themselves to the front of his cape, and then they trailed up his reflection. Odd, his brain hadn’t a clue what to think about as he prepared for this – reluctant -- interaction. All he could do was stare at himself for a second before those eyes drooped to his feet.

Well, he was finally getting to see Ratboy Genius after...whatever the those past few years even *were*.

#

“I’m not surprised in the least that Little King John is still hesitant around me,” Ratboy Genius shifted on one foot as he and Sneezy waited patiently in front of the kingdom entrance, “it’s understandable.”

Sneezy hummed at that. “He *is* hesitant...a little bit, though.”

“A little?”

“You’d be surprised. Might I say, he was concerned when he first returned here.”

The rat boy blinked. “He was?”

His tail wagged. “Oh, quite so.” Sneezy gave a small jerk of his head, over his shoulder at the door, saying, “He wondered and pondered about *your* fate, not only if the Final Charge worked, but *you* as an individual.”

Ratboy Genius quietly glanced over his shoulder as well for a few seconds before returning ahead. He almost wanted to respond to that, perhaps ask for Sneezy for more details about the king, but he soon concluded that the best option was to speak with Little King John, bringing it up that way or allow the king to say it in his own words. It was meticulous to do that instead of prying from Sneezy.

“Are you excited about this, Ratboy Genius?”

“...I think I am, Sneezy.”

Sneezy’s tail wagged again.

The loud “ka-chunk” of the massive door being unlocked threw the two friends off-guard momentarily, but they composed themselves and turned around in time to see Little King John pulling it open with a dramatic flap of his cape being blown by the faint breeze caused by said doors. Sneezy and Ratboy Genius could feel a slight tug from the man-made gust, and the ratboy had to grip his hat to keep it steady as his eyes suddenly met Little King John’s.

Why did he have a feeling that John knew they were talking about him?

The king broke the silence, his eyes going to and fro the duo, “I take it that you two are ready?”

In unison, Sneezy and Ratboy Genius nodded in response, and immediately, Little King John stepped out halfway, his eyes taking a turn to switch between them again before going ahead.

Sneezy chimed in, “Whenever you’re ready, John.”

The king fully stepped outside now and then walked several feet past Sneezy and Ratboy Genius with a quiet huff; however, instead of starting their walk right away, Little King John looked over his shoulder and then stretched his neck over towards Ratboy Genius.

“And remember,” he told the yellow rat, “*I* get to lead where we go – because this is *my* kingdom.”

And all Ratboy Genius did was nod in agreement. “It would make sense, considering where I am and who owns it,” he said in near accuracy to Little King John’s words from earlier that day.

“...” Little King John was impressed hearing those words return so soon, but he refused to verbally acknowledge it; instead, he retracted his neck to its natural position without his eyes leaving Ratboy Genius. “Good. Now let’s go.”

Sneezy shot Ratboy Genius a look with a wag of his tail as the rat nodded once more.

#

Little King John had shown off the little theatre that had begun construction weeks ago, its foundation and framework already set but there lacked basic things such as windows and door. He as-a-matter-of-factly said out loud that it would be a rather nice one to perform in once it was complete.

“I wouldn’t mind visiting it once it’s done,” Ratboy Genius earnestly told the king, now at his side.

Little King John’s mouth formed a thin line but kept his snark to a minimum, “Get back to me about that in half a year, and I’ll think about it.”

Sneezy jumped into the conversation, translating, “What he means to say is ‘yes, *I don’t see why not*’—”

“Okay that’s enough, let’s keep going,” he interrupted before Sneezy could say anything else even remotely embarrassing (to him, anyway).

Little King John began to walk off, and soon Ratboy Genius and Sneezy followed, allowing the king to continue the tour. The more they walked, the more it seemed those lovely cherry blossom petals accompanied them on their tour, via light breeze, and Ratboy Genius couldn’t resist lifting a hand to see if he could capture one; the group walked by a shop which was currently occupied by a few of those unique “Minecraft” humanoids who also resided on the land when Ratboy Genius successfully did so.

“Little King John,” Ratboy Genius spoke up with a smile, “I was telling Sneezy about how in certain parts of the world, there are special days that are observed to watch the blooming of cherry blossom trees,” his ears wiggled, “it’s called *hanami*. Do you know if your cherry blossoms only last for a week or two?”

Little King John looked over his shoulder with a huff. “They run a cycle akin to a regular tree. They lose their buds and petals by late fall, go into hibernation, and then bloom in the spring.”

“That is interesting! Then again, this world *does* seem to function differently, so I shouldn’t be too surprised.”

“Hm.”

Sneezy joined in, “I forgot to mention this to you, Ratboy Genius, but there is also a wonderful viewing spot from above as soon as spring arrives.”

As Little King John quirked a brow in thought, Ratboy Genius questioned, “From the ‘castle’, Sneezy?”

The king slowed his walking for the duo to join his side, so he could simply listen to the conversation better without twisting his neck too much whilst Sneezy answered, “That is one spot, yes, but the one I’m talking about is the watchtower we’ve built a while ago.”

“Oh, that place.” Little King John rubbed his chin and then glanced to the other rat. “I suppose we can head there next – it’s further ahead of here.”

Again, Ratboy Genius’ ears wiggled with happiness. “Can’t wait. I bet it’s a lovely view!”

With a nod, Little King John picked up the pace and crossed his arms behind his back, and Ratboy Genius did the same thing, though in a rather casual manner. Sneezy, though he kept a neutral face and tone of voice, felt his tail wag, for he had a plan up his sleeve, and unbeknownst to Little King John, he already fell for it.

#

When he first arrived at this world, Ratboy Genius admittedly didn’t pay much attention to the watchtower as he walked with Sneezy; however, once the trio got closer to the massive pillar which was to the east of the land, Ratboy Genius couldn’t help but admire the structure. Of course, it being built by Little King John, the tower was going to be built by only the best material available; after all, it had to stand tall even through the harshest of weather. The height was close to matching the reborn starship, but perhaps because of its location, the view of the land below might be better somehow.

“Allow me,” Little King John immediately said as they, at last, approached the tower, “you two can follow, that way, I can formally present the marvelous sight.”

A little rude but expected of Little King John. Ratboy Genius simply nodded. “Okay.”

Sneezy also nodded. “Go right ahead. Ratboy, you can go after him. It might take me a moment to climb up there.”

As expected of the royal rat, he climbed up the ladder with ease as he stretched his neck upwards, up until he could see the tower platform. He soon, midway through the climb, pulled himself higher by stretching his arms, skipping a few steps, and then lugging his body as though it was baggage. Ratboy Genius...he could try using his stretch ability as well, but not only did he not understand its full potential, he didn’t feel comfortable enough to use it, *especially* not in front of Little King John.

Ratboy Genius never did figure out why he shared the same ability as the purple rat ahead of him, and he had a feeling he might in the future, just not now, on this day. On this day, he was attempting to get close to Little King John, to see if he was alright after the Final Charge. While obvious that the king was physically okay, Ratboy Genius wasn't certain if he was emotionally or mentally sound of mind. So far, it seemed like Little King John retained his stuffy attitude towards him; however, he replayed what Sneezy informed him as they waited for Little King John, *"He was concerned when he first returned here. He wondered and pondered about your fate, not only if the Final Charge worked, but you as an individual."*

Little King John, who now stood on the platform, watched Ratboy Genius finally join him at the top. When Ratboy Genius gathered himself, he looked around the rather large platform which had a small fold-up bed, a chair, and a large chest which sat beside the "entrance". Did Little King John spend his time up here sometimes?

"Sneezy," an annoyed Little King John's voice broke his train of thought, and the yellow rat turned to see him stretching his neck over the platform, down the ladder, "why are you still all the way down there?" Ratboy Genius decided to join his side to see what the holdup was.

Sneezy was still on the ground, wagging his tail up at the duo. "Sorry, I completely forgot that I need to get dinner ready for us, but you two can stay up there and enjoy the view for a bit."

Little King John's neck extended even longer, reaching halfway down to look at Sneezy better. "You can't be serious. I demand you get up here right now!"

He didn't comply to the pitiful order. "Oh, but I am serious. It would be better if I made it now instead of when we get back, that way, it will actually be ready for you two."

The purple rat furrowed his brows. "But—"

"John," Sneezy said, though he lowered his voice for the sake of Little King John, "it's been nearly a year since you've last seen him, and yet here you are, avoiding him like the plague," his tail wagged softer, "you should do this for yourself instead of side-stepping around him. Go on now."

His neck retracted a little, "...", and it retracted more, and more, until Little King John returned his neck to its normal position.

And without another word, Sneezy turned and began to stroll back to the castle.

Little King John sighed.

Ratboy Genius was quick to notice how peeved how the king looked with those knitted brows and how his mouth made a straight line, so he said out loud, "Little King John, what did Sneezy say?"

His shoulders drooped. “He said he’s going to make dinner and offered to let us view the cherry blossoms without him.”

He blinked. Perhaps Sneezy was giving them some time alone, and Ratboy knew he needed to thank him later for that. “Oh, okay. Shall we look then?”

“...” Little King John avoided looking at Ratboy Genius for a moment by darting his eyes off to the side, but then he gave in and returned his attention to the yellow rat beside him. “If you’d like to.”

Ratboy Genius nodded happily.

So with a gesture of a hand, Little King John beckoned Ratboy Genius to follow him to the left of the tower, closer to where there were multitudes of cherry blossom trees. Little King John rested his hands atop the ledge gingerly as his eyes trailed over towards the beautiful pink trees, and soon he sensed Ratboy Genius joining his side once more, also placing his own hands on the ledge as well. His ears perked upon hearing a faint gasp coming from the yellow rat, and he gave into his curiosity and glanced to Ratboy Genius. It was clear that he was amazed by the view of the loose cherry blossom petals being lured away from the trees and into the land from high above. They danced and twirled around each other, the trees, buildings, even the odd beings who occupied the land – just about everywhere. It would be silly not to confess that when he first saw this, Little King John was astounded by the sight...

But then he wished those trees were at his old home, too.

“As lovely as this place is, I know this could never replace your old one.”

He blinked and then looked at Ratboy Genius who, in turn, was looking back at him. “Glad we can agree on something.”

Ratboy Genius nodded. “I know it must hurt that it’s gone, and I know my words alone aren’t enough to make up for it but believe me when I say that I do appreciate you helping us.” He turned his body a bit to face him better. “I’m not sure you’ve felt the same, but for a while, I was worried about you until I heard from Sneezy that you were alright.”

And there went those dumb ears of his, wiggling in delight.

“Thank you for allowing me to come here today, Little King John.”

Wait, was he holding his hand? Why was that yellow fool *placing a hand over his*?? Was this affection?

...but he didn’t yank away. Sure, he was immensely thrown off by the touch, but Little King John allowed him to hold his hand which lightly clutched the ledge.

“It’s been nearly a year since you’ve last seen him, and yet here you are, avoiding him like the plague. You should do this for yourself instead of side-stepping around him,”

Sneezy's suggestion echoed in his brain and, darn that Sneezy...he was right, wasn't he? The yellow fool was *right there*, and they were alone, so why hesitate?

Little King John's eyes met Ratboy Genius' as he said loud and clear, "You're a pain in my side, but I was worried about your well-being back there. Maybe a part of me thought you could've died somehow; however, it's obviously not the case." His eyes darted to the side for a second and then returned to Ratboy Genius. "I'm glad you're safe and sound. Although *I* might not be able to make up for what I've done in the past, perhaps this could be a step in the right direction. Thank you for coming here, Ratboy Genius."

After a brief surprised look on Ratboy Genius' face, the wiggling of his ears started. "I'm happy to hear that coming from you. I know it must've been difficult to do that."

He huffed. "It wasn't hard at all." Gently, Little King John withdrew his hand. "I think we've given Sneezy enough time...let's head back to the ship. You can head down first."

Ratboy Genius nodded twice in understanding. "Alright, Johnny!"

Little King John blinked widely at the...w—was that a nickname? And a bad one, at that? As Ratboy Genius gleefully started heading down the ladder, the royal rat hurried over to the start of the ladder and stretched his neck down after Ratboy Genius. "Stop! Stop that right now! I am *Little King John*! Remember my name, you yellow fool!"

Once he knew Ratboy Genius reached the bottom, Little King John was quick with his climbing again, thanks to his stretchable limbs, and began to ramble about how childish the nickname was and "not to disrespect" his royal status, even though, as far as anybody knew, Ratboy Genius was also "royalty" in his own light and didn't mind things such as nicknames, as he used them for his friends – both acquaintances, and those who were close to him...

...and yes, that also included the king who continued to ramble on, the same king who started off on the wrong foot and then began a long journey of redemption – Little King John.

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